

PRANG, LOUIS
(ENGRAYER)

DRAWER 19A

Artists - P

HL 20003 285 02457

Artists of Abraham Lincoln portraits

Louis Prang

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

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OFFICE OF THE LINCOLN NATIONAL MONUMENT ASSOCIATION, Springfield, Illinois.

MONUMENT TO PRESIDENT LINCOLN. To the people of the United States: The National Lincoln Monument Association earnestly invite the attention and favorable regard of their fellow-citizens throughout the United States, to a Steel Engraving of "Abraham Lincoln and his Emancipation Proclamation," published by L. Prang & Co., Art Publishers of Boston, Mass., the entire net proceeds of the sale of which the proprietor has generously donated to the funds of this Association, as a means of public contribution towards the erection of a National Monument that shall be worthy of Abraham Lincoln, and of the American people.

(Signed) R. L. OGLESEY, Pres., and Gov. Ill.
CLINTON L. CONKLING, Sec.

To accomplish this worthy object the Ladies throughout the country are earnestly invited to specially organize from among themselves, in every place, a sufficient number of canvassers to make a personal appeal to all for the purchase of this work of art, as their contribution toward the object in view. But comparatively few Ladies can be employed in the actual labor necessary, but each and all are earnestly requested to canvass their own names.

In all places having a direct trade with the farming community adequate measures for obtaining their subscriptions should be adopted.

The Portrait and Proclamation will be combined in one work, the latter an exact fac simile of the original as it left its immortal author's hands, and the Portrait will be the most truthful likeness of him heretofore published; and in all respects the work will be the best which American talent can produce, and of its own merits, independent of its benevolent object, worthy of a place in every gentleman's house.

The price fixed upon is five dollars per copy, which is less than any similar work of art could be afforded by private publication.

So far as practicable payment of the money should be asked at the time of the subscription; but payment should not be insisted upon, otherwise than as a favor, saving trouble and expense.

The names and residences of subscribers should, in all cases, be written in ink, in well-bound pass-books, as it will take some time to accomplish the publication and delivery of the work.

In all cases where several are engaged in obtaining subscribers, some responsible gentleman should be selected, as a Treasurer, to whom all moneys collected should be paid over, and books containing subscribers names deposited with him.

All remittances must be made by means of Banker's draft, or Certificates of Deposit in any National Bank, upon, or in any of the following cities, to wit: New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, Milwaukee or Detroit.

10125/65

The Rougle Forum
Dec. 15, 1968

Louis Prang, known as the "Father of the American Christmas card."



Louis Prang

Mr. Crayon...

Mr. Christmas Card...

Mr. "Chromo"

© Claudia Boynton 1968

Up and down the land our ears are daily bent and our history books filled with accounts of the accomplishments of generals, artists, statesmen, scientists, and politicians but little about the men who quietly develop their businesses and in so doing frequently contribute not only to our comfort but often significantly to the enrichment of our lives.

Such a man was Louis Prang who, never considering himself an artist, nonetheless put thousands of famous pictures into American homes, produced outstanding lithographic work in book illustration, and was instrumental in introducing crayons and water colors into public schools with simple manuals on how to use them.

When a child in primary grades picks up a crayon or paint brush today, he is carrying the torch for a Louis Prang idea.

The strange part of this all is that Louis Prang was originally trained to make printed calico. His father was a French Huguenot, his mother German. True to tradition among many Huguenots, the father was engaged in textile manufacture, being a partner in making printed calicos. Louis was born in Breslau, Silesia, March 12, 1824. His was an unusual education. Poor health kept him from much formal schooling; yet, as he grew older, he obtained by his own devices an excellent educational background for the work he was to do.

First, he learned the fundamentals

of those skills necessary to calico manufacture through a 5-year apprenticeship in his father's plant where he was destined to become a superintendent. This training included practical designing, engraving on both wood and metal, color mixing, dyeing, and printing.

At 18 he went to Westphalia for further study in printing and dyeing techniques. Through a year's work in helping his brother-in-law manage a paper mill, he learned about many types of paper; and, as a journeyman, he spent five years in Bohemia where he gained an even wider knowledge of printing and dyeing textiles. Still not satisfied, Prang spent a year in Vienna and visited textile centers in France, Great Britain, and Switzerland.

Additionally, in later life, he secured private instruction in drawing, modeling, chemistry, even in language that was of considerable assistance to him.

While still in Europe, Louis Prang took part in the revolutionary upsurge in Germany that sent so many valued citizens to this country in 1848 and the years following. In 1850 at 26, after having fled first to Bohemia, then to Switzerland, he came to America and settled in Boston.

This New England town, being what it was in mid-19th century, had no employment to offer him in his line. He tried, then, with small capital and in partnership with a German-American to issue an architectural publication; but this venture was short-lived. Next, caught up by the excite-

ment over manufacturing that was in the air, he entered leather goods production; but this, too, was unsatisfactory. Finally, he took up wood engraving for book illustration and found success first on his own, then for the art director of "Gleason's Pictorial," and still later for an English engraver.

Although never trained in book illustration, his early apprenticeship in the similar work of engraving hand blocks used in printing the calico of those days served him in good stead. In 1851, he married a Swiss girl, Rosa Gerber, and with the new work he had found, they settled down into a period where all went well for five years.

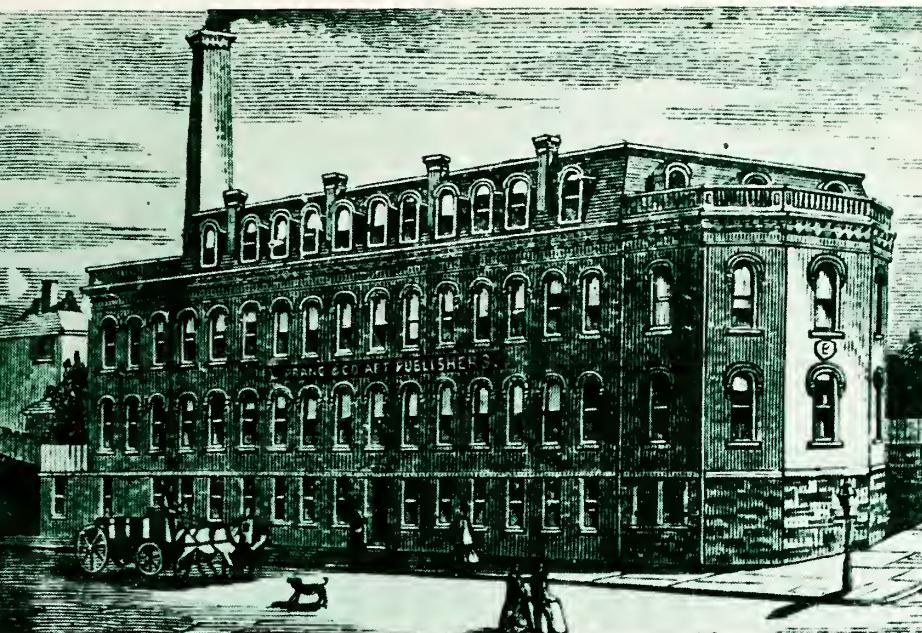
But in 1856, ill health forced him to change his occupation. In July of that year, he formed a partnership with Julius Mayer — Prang & Mayer, lithographers and copper-plate press manufacturers. Four years later, at 36, Prang bought out his partner and the company became L. Prang & Co., involving him in job printing: business cards, small advertisements, announcements, etc.

But this was not the way of Louis Prang.

Within 24 hours after receiving the news of the firing upon Fort Sumter at the outbreak of the Civil War, he had engraved and placed on sale a lithographic map of the Charleston Harbor showing the island on which the Fort was located.

This map met with such an immediate response that Prang followed it





Prang's publishing plant at Roxbury, Massachusetts.



The earliest known holiday greeting card—a crude woodcut printed about 1450 in the Rhine Valley, Germany.

throughout the years of the war with maps that showed the territory over which the armies of the north and south were fighting and the deployment of troops and equipment during major battles. Such were the first war maps to be made in America, giving Prang the distinction of opening a whole new field, one that has since seen tremendous development.

With his typical thought of the extra, Prang included with his maps red and blue pencils so his customers could mark the locations and movements of the opposing armies. Whether he realized it or not, these two colored pencils marked a milestone in his life. They touched off in his mind a further idea that was to have an even more far-reaching impact. For here, was the beginning of the still-famous Prang colors.

Before that idea ripened, another phase of activity caught Prang's attention.

In 1864 he took his family to Europe, bringing back the idea of making lithographic reproductions of famous works of art. When he first talked of this plan, many doubted that the American public — still not far removed from the hardships of pioneer days — would appreciate these paintings or be willing to pay the then high price of \$6 made necessary by reproduction costs. It was not long, however, before the soundness of Prang's idea was proved, proved overwhelmingly.

It soon became clear that what he

had had the wit to supply filled an unrealized hunger in a people derived from older cultures but who for two generations had been surrounded by an environment where refinements were as yet unfamiliar luxuries.

Prang's first chromolithographs or "chromos" as he called them, thereby coining a word that, with changed meaning, has become part of common speech, were produced in 1866. Acceptance was so enthusiastic that he had to increase his production facilities.

Indeed, affairs went so well that he was able to establish a model printing plant in Roxbury, Mass. in 1867. With the improvements in equipment this gave him, he was able to reach the highest perfection in his work, a perfection that few have since reached if ever surpassed. Besides his chromos, he carried on regular printing as a foundation for his further explorations in new fields of art printing.

By 1874 he was able to implement an idea he had long wanted to develop — to design and sell greeting cards for Christmas. The first of these he offered for sale in England. The following year, he introduced them in the United States and so became the Father of the Greeting Card Industry in this country.

As in the case of his chromos, these cards — that look so quaint today — gained a quick popularity. People were charmed with them, even as collectors are today. Pursuing the idea, Prang initiated prize contests for outstanding

designs for his cards and, as an important by-product, helped develop and promote the talents of a number of American artists who later received national recognition.

It was not long before Prang's Christmas cards, like his chromos, became the standard of excellence for art color printing the world over.

About this time, possibly influenced by the rising interest in the West among people in the eastern half of the country, the United States government asked Louis Prang to make lithographic reproductions of Thomas Moran's fine water colors of the Far West. This he did so well that years later, in 1954, the catalog of the excellent Holiday Collection of Western Americana termed the completed work: "Unexcelled among books on the Far West for the magnificence of its plates, which have never been surpassed either in importance or beauty."

Prang had never forgotten the red and blue pencils he included with the Fort Sumter maps. His experience with young artists who competed with designs for his Christmas cards intensified his conviction that more could be done to increase the value of art instruction in the public schools. As the country developed westward more of such schools were taking over from the older idea of private academies. As early as 1856 Prang had become interested in the teaching of art to boys and girls in the grades and had imported water colors from Germany.

The same year he sent his first Christmas cards to England, he began publishing books on drawing.

By 1882, he was ready to form the Prang Educational Co. which was rounded out by Prang Normal Art Classes. Mary Dana Hieks, with a rich background in the field and an author in her own right, proved to be the company's able director. For the next 14 years, as editor also of the Prang Press, she did much to extend the teaching of drawing and allied subjects in schools. Her manuals were widely used and her personal demonstrations were markedly influential in the development of methods of instruction.

Color had always been close to Prang's heart. "My favorite theme is color," he confessed to a later interviewer. "I was brought up a colorist, and color mixer." In 1898 at the age of 74 and after 40 years of study given to color classification for the multiple uses which his work demanded, he published the "Prang Standard of Color" and co-authored with Mrs. Hieks and J. S. Clark, "Suggestions for Color Instruction."

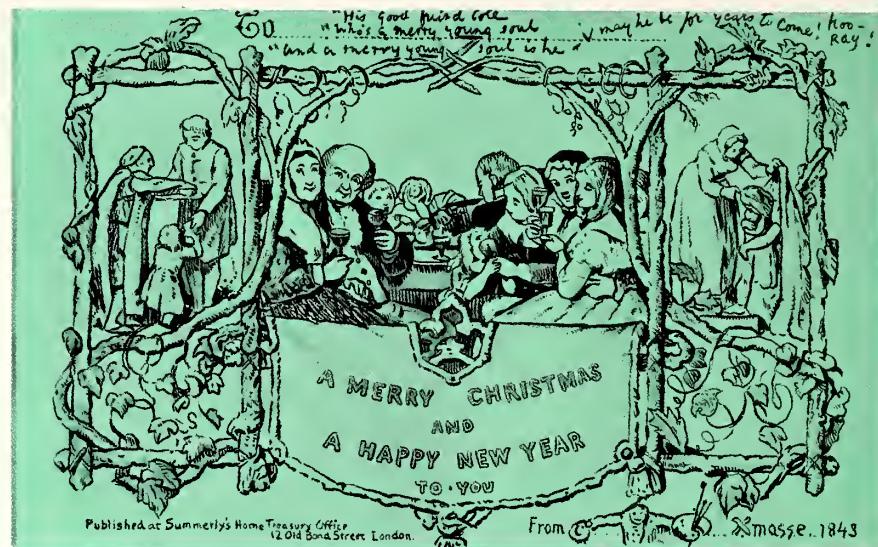
These two books had a deep and lasting influence on color work in schools. The classification gave to any user of color a practical working guide in a field that had long been confused and a subject of debate — still not completely settled as members of the American Society for Testing Materials will readily attest.

In this same year, Louis Prang's wife died; and two years later at the age of 76 he married his long-time associate, Mary Dana Hieks, then 63. They had worked together for years, having something of the same energy and educational interests, the same desire to develop in depth whatever they put their hands to and make their services significant to those who bought Prang products.

After their marriage and during his last years, they traveled extensively, visiting most of the countries in the world. On their way to the 1909 Seattle Exposition, he became ill in Los Angeles and died June 11, at the age of 85.

Left alone, Mrs. Prang enrolled in courses at Radcliffe College and Harvard, receiving the degree of Associate in Arts from the former in 1916 at 80 and from Harvard, the degree of Master of Education in 1921 when she was in her 85th year. At 90, she died in Melrose, Mass.

The breadth of Louis Prang's interests is reflected in the list of his memberships: The American Archeo-



The world's first known Christmas card! This quaint greeting was designed in 1843 by John Calcott Horsley.



A notable trend in the tremendous growth of religious Christmas card sending is the appearance of many colorful designs showing cherubs or children, or child-like angels adding their charm and thoughtfulness to Christmas cards of unusual appeal.

logical Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Society of Arts, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the American Park and Outdoor Association, the Massachusetts Suffrage Association, the Bostonian Society, the Meehanies Charitable Association of Boston, the Single Tax League, etc.

From every world's fair from 1873 to 1900, Prang received medals and the quality of his work brought him other honors. But the greatest test of his skill came in W. T. Walters' unique book, "Oriental Ceramic Art."

Walters, a Baltimore multi-millionaire, owned an unusually fine collection of Chinese porcelains. (It will be remembered that Baltimore had long been a prime port of entry for such cherished pieces.) Desiring to publish a book with plates that would faithfully reproduce the subtle tonalities of these porcelains, he had searched for a craftsman able to do justice to the

delicacy and richness of the colors. But nowhere had he found the right man, until he met Louis Prang.

Prang's lifetime involvement with color and his devotion to painstaking exactitude in guarding each step in the lithographic process made the difference. Some of the 116 color plates he produced for this book required 44 separate printings. None fewer than 20. "Oriental Ceramic Art" was published in a limited edition of 500 copies, priced at \$500 each. Walters was satisfied beyond his long-cherished hopes.

Louis Prang called the book his "monument."

In 1918, nearly a decade after her husband's death, Mrs. Prang had assigned the rights to use "Prang" as a brand name for educational materials to the American Crayon Co. of Sandusky, Ohio (now a division of the Joseph Dixon Crucible Co. of Jersey City). And two years later, she had



THE MADONNA is invariably the most popular illustration on religious Christmas cards each year.



Mom's Plum pudding and other Christmas goodies serve as a reminder of "Old days, old times, old friends".

The gabled houses of the 1800's are perennially favorites in the galaxy of Christmas cards.



Old-fashioned spice jars lend a nostalgic atmosphere.



dissolved the business of the Prang Educational Co. She was then 83 and hard at work on her studies at Cambridge.

Continuing in the tradition of excellence established by Prang, the American Crayon Prang line of educational products are known for their reliable quality. They have kept the Prang name a household word in school children's colorants and for craft use.

Exemplifying the often strange working of coincidence is the fact that Louis Prang and Joseph Dixon (founder of the Dixon company, currently parent of the Prang line) had much in common. Both early in their careers had been wood and metal engravers, becoming printers, lithographers, and book publishers. Both engaged in the designing, printing, and dyeing of calico, popular for women's dresses in their day.

Although both men, each in his way, made outstanding contributions

to cultural and industrial progress in America in the 19th and early 20th centuries, neither is generally known to present generations outside of the fields in which they worked. Each name, however, remains a brand name of quality.

The artificial distinction between fine art and commercial art is one of the inconsistencies of traditional aesthetics which has militated unfairly against fine craftsmen.

The fact that Louis Prang had the skill to bring into American homes color reproductions of paintings most would never otherwise have seen; the fact that his magnificent plates made vivid to Americans in the East the monumental beauty of the Far West as captured in Thomas Moran's water colors; and the fact that his technique in lithographing was so perfect that he could reproduce the mystic tonalities of Chinese porcelains in a book that today is priceless because of them —

these are accomplishments requiring an exacting technique and an extraordinary ability in color and color chemistry that demand just recognition.

Nor should Prang's contribution in bringing organization to art work in schools, his competitions that meant opportunity to young artists, and the great joy and delight families found in his inimitable Christmas cards ever be forgotten.

In the usually ineffectual squabbles over fine vs. commercial art, the answer would seem to have been clearly stated by a wise man who said, "Fine art becomes commercial art when it finds a purchaser."

Calico manufacturer, printer, lithographer, map maker, book illustrator, educator, and colorist, his was a long life of many accomplishments; but at this time of the year, especially, the greeting card industry has good cause to lift its collective hat in fond memory of Louis Prang.



STAMPS -

To Stamp Out Tuberculosis

By John T. Cunningham

No Christmas Seal has ever been purchased with more genuine feeling than the one bought by a thin little newsboy who dashed into the office of the *Philadelphia North American* on December 13, 1907. Under his arm he carried copies of the *North American*, featuring that day a seven-column headline announcing that the newspaper was selling Christmas seals to fight tuberculosis.

The newsboy stepped to the marble counter, higher than his head, reached up and laid down a copper cent. He said:

"Gimme one. Me sister's got it!"

Since that day in 1907, Christmas Seals have brought more than \$750 million to the fight against tuberculosis and other respiratory diseases. That three-quarters of a billion dollars has virtually eliminated tuberculosis as one of the nation's most frightful killers and cripplers, although it is still a threat. The fight has been so successful that last February the National Tuberculosis Association became the National Tuberculosis and Respiratory Disease Association, reflecting both past successes and future goals.

This year's seal, resplendent with a

partridge in a pear tree (from the English folk song "The Twelve Days of Christmas"), is the sixty-second in an unbroken line from 1907. That line rests on a foundation of almost instant success — once the simple idea was conceived.

Commemorative stamps or charity seals were really not new, even sixty years ago: Charity stamps had been sold during the Civil War to raise money for wounded soldiers and sailors. They enjoyed a limited sale, but both the stamps and the idea lapsed into the realm of forgotten things.

Then a postal clerk named Einar Holboll sat in a Denmark post office, pounding cancellations on Christmas cards and letters. Amid the monotony, he turned his thoughts to other matters. How, for example, might Denmark's sufferers from tuberculosis be helped in the Christmas season? If only a portion of this postage stamp money could be set aside for that purpose.

Gradually an idea evolved: why not sell a special stamp to be placed alongside the regular government stamp? Proceeds could be earmarked to aid victims of tuberculosis. Holboll talked

with superiors, pushed his appeal all the way to the Danish palace. The royal family gave enthusiastic endorsement — so heartfelt that the Queen of Denmark agreed to have her picture on the first stamp issued in 1904. It carried the simple word *Julen*, or Yule, without any word of the purpose.

Danes immediately welcomed the seals and by 1908 the stamp contained a painting of the first Denmark TB sanitorium, completely financed by the previous Christmas sales. Jacob Riis, the great Danish-American writer and crusader against the evils of New York City's slums, told this country about the Denmark Christmas seals in an article in the *Outlook* for November 1907.

Riis needed no prompting. Six of his brothers had died in Denmark of the disease. Each day as he toured New York's slums he saw young and old collapsing from the swift-striking crippler. His article was a beacon of hope, shining across the Atlantic from his homeland.

Events were moving swiftly to bring this country its first Christmas Seal. The positive reaction came in Delaware, where doctors had set up a



Hawthorne Manor

FROM THE HALLMARK DESIGN COLLECTIONS

This card was inspired by the Louis Prang Collection, Hallmark Archives. Louis Prang (1824-1909) emigrated from Germany in 1850 and set up a printing shop in Boston. By perfecting the process of chromolithography, Prang brought the colors of nature into American homes through his greeting cards, albums, and prints. He became known as the "Father of the American Christmas card."

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